

Republicans say thousands in Wisconsin may have circumvented voter ID requirement

by Zachary Halaschak, Breaking News Reporter | 📧 | November 10, 2020 06:30 AM



MADISON, Wisconsin — Republicans in Wisconsin are raising questions about the large number of people, particularly new voters, who avoided having to show a photo ID to vote by listing themselves as “indefinitely confined.”

When requesting an absentee ballot, Wisconsin law allows voters to self-certify if they are “indefinitely confined” to their residence because of age, physical illness, or disability for an indefinite period of time. Doing so allows them to submit an absentee ballot without having to show any form of photo ID, although they must have a ballot witness sign off.

This year, the number of indefinitely confined voters soared amid the coronavirus pandemic, leaving Republicans saying they are concerned about potential fraud. In 2019, about 72,000 voters said they were indefinitely confined. That number reportedly ballooned to 243,000 this year.

Controversy arose in March, when the clerk of Dane County posted on social media that the governor’s lockdown order met the threshold for voters to be indefinitely confined. Milwaukee County also issued similar guidance. But the state’s Supreme Court later [sided with the GOP](#) and said that the clerk’s “advice was legally incorrect.” Despite that, if a voter listed themselves as indefinitely confined during the primaries, an absentee ballot was automatically sent to them for the general election.

A GOP official told the *Washington Examiner* on Monday that thousands may have voted without showing a photo ID because of the confusion. The official asserted that Republicans know the system of marking oneself as indefinitely confined has been abused in Wisconsin.

“At what point does it become fraud? I think it became fraud in April, when people were listing themselves as

indefinitely confined when they were not. And that was just allowed to continue and get worse and worse,” the official said. The official noted that despite the Supreme Court decision, there wasn’t a definitive ruling about what to do with those who had already listed themselves as such.

“It was a net loss of us, no question about it,” the official said, noting that 25,000 of the indefinitely confined voters were voting for the first time.

“We know there are people who are indefinitely confined. That’s what the law was put in place for, but they left a loophole which you could drive a truck through,” the official said. Clerks were encouraged to double-check if voters were, in fact, indefinitely confined, but the official said the sheer numbers made doing so “practically impossible.”

There are also restrictions and limitations about what the clerks can ask voters — for example, details about what disability they might have.

Kenneth Dragotta, a board member of the Waukesha County Republican Party, told the *Washington Examiner* that the matter was a major concern to the party.

"So you can register as indefinitely confined, and a ballot is going to be sent to you every election. You don't even have to request it," he said. "But here's the problem. Indefinitely confined people are not required to provide proof of identification or an ID card. There's no requirement that that be in the hands of the election commission or the municipal clerk prior to issuing a ballot.

"You don't even have a voter ID requirement on those people that registered," Dragotta added. "All you have is proof of residency that is required. But does that sound like a really robust, safe election process? I think not."

The GOP thinks one remedy to the problem would be to wipe all of the people who weren't on the indefinitely confined list before the pandemic and have them reapply for the status.

Right now, as part of an ongoing legal case, the Wisconsin GOP is asking the state's Supreme Court to define exactly what "indefinitely confined" actually means.

The statewide GOP said it is deferring other legal action related to this year's election results up to President Trump's team but is advising and assisting the campaign on developments. The *Washington Examiner* reached out to the Trump campaign for comment but did not immediately receive a response. Thus far, the campaign has not filed any lawsuits over the Wisconsin election but has pursued legal action in other states such as [Pennsylvania](#), [Michigan](#), [Georgia](#), and [Nevada](#).

The Trump campaign has said it is seeking a recount in Wisconsin. Joe Biden, the presumptive winner of the 2020 presidential election, [leads Trump in the Badger State](#) 49.6% to 48.9% — or by just about 20,500 votes. In 2016, when Trump won the state by fewer than 23,000 votes, a recount was requested by Green Party candidate Jill Stein, which increased Trump's lead by 131 votes.

Katherine Doyle contributed to this article.

